United Nations E/CN.6/2000/PC/7

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2000

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"
Third session
3-17 March 2000
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Letter dated 11 February 2000 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

I have the honour to write to you regarding the organization of the work of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

I should like to refer in particular to the number of plenary meetings to be held during the special session (Monday to Friday, 5 to 9 June 2000) and the organization of the list of speakers for the debate in plenary.

May I recommend the following for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the twenty-third special session.

It is my recommendation that the plenary hold 10 meetings over the five-day period, with two meetings per day, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. I should also like to propose that statements in the debate in plenary be limited to seven minutes. This arrangement would allow the plenary to hear Member States and observers who wish to participate.

* E/CN.6/2000/PC/1.

00-31156 (E) 290200

On Monday morning, the General Assembly would hear 13 speakers only because organizational matters would take one hour. Subsequently, all morning meetings would feature 18 speakers, and all afternoon meetings 19 speakers. On the afternoon of Friday, in addition to final speakers in the debate, the Assembly would adopt the final document or documents.

I also recommend that the list of speakers for the debate in plenary be created by a drawing of lots. This system worked very well for the past three special sessions and I recommend that it also be used for the twenty-third special session.

I should like to propose that precedence in the speaking order be given to Heads of State, Vice-Presidents, Crown Princes or Princesses and Heads of Government and that they have equal standing as regards the list of speakers. Then Ministers/Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Chairmen of Delegation/Vice-Ministers and Chairmen of Delegation would be given the floor.

A meeting for the purpose of creating the list of speakers would be held on Wednesday, 26 April 2000. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would preside over the meeting and would draw names of Member States from two boxes. The first box (from which names would be drawn first) would contain the names of the Member States that had informed the secretariat of the Assembly, in writing, no later than two days before the meeting, that their speaker would be a Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government. The second box would contain the names of other Member States.

When called, the representative of the Member State would approach the podium, where 10 boxes representing the 10 meetings would be displayed. The representative would be asked to draw, from the box representing the preferred meeting, a chip showing the number of the speaking slot, and would also be asked to indicate the level of representation of the speaker. This information would be recorded by the Secretariat.

Subsequently, the Secretariat would publish the list reflecting the results of the drawing of lots, but rearranged to reflect the precedence outlined above. Exchanges of speaking slots between delegations will be possible. However, were the exchange to involve a speaker in the Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government category and a speaker in any other category, then the speaker in the former category would be moved to the last position available in that category, and the speaker in the latter category would be moved to the last position available in that category.

Should the level of representation of a delegation change from the Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government category to any other category, then the speaker would go to the last position for Member States in the list of speakers for the debate in plenary at the last plenary meeting.

I should like to propose that observers be allowed to make statements in the debate in plenary. I recommend that the practice of the General Assembly be followed whereby observers are included in the list of speakers after all Member States. Inclusion of observers in the list of speakers could be done on a first-come first-served basis, by contacting the secretariat of the Assembly. Pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, Palestine would participate in the

drawing of lots so that it could be determined at which meeting it would be the last speaker.

If these recommendations are acceptable to the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the twenty-third special session, they should be incorporated in its report to the General Assembly at its special session.

I should like to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the preparatory committee and welcome your comments and thoughts on the arrangements proposed herein.

(*Signed*) Theo-Ben **Gurirab**

United Nations E/CN.6/2000/PC/8

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Draft provisional agenda and organizational matters for the special session of the General Assembly

Note by the Secretariat

1. The present document was prepared by the Secretariat in accordance with past practice in respect of special sessions of the General Assembly and is submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" for its consideration with a view to providing recommendations for adoption by the Assembly at its special session.

I. Draft provisional agenda

2. The preparatory committee may wish to recommend the adoption of the following draft provisional agenda for the special session of the General Assembly:

* E/CN.6/2000/PC/1.

00-31168 (E) 280200

1. Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Namibia.
2. Minute of silent prayer or meditation.
3. Credentials of representatives to the special session of the General Assembly:
   (a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee;
   (b) Report of the Credentials Committee.
4. Election of the President.
5. Report of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".
6. Organization of the session.
7. Adoption of the agenda.
8. Review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action.
9. Further actions and initiatives for overcoming obstacles to the implementation of the Platform for Action.
10. Adoption of the final document(s).

II. Organizational arrangements

3. The preparatory body may wish to recommend the organizational arrangements set forth below for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", to be held at Headquarters from 5 to 9 June 2000.

President

4. The special session should be held under the presidency of the President of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

Vice-Presidents

5. The Vice-Presidents of the special session should be the same as those of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole

6. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly shall establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-third Special Session.

7. The Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole should consist of one Chairperson and nine Vice-Chairpersons, one of whom will serve as Rapporteur. The Bureau of the preparatory committee should serve as the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Credentials Committee

8. The Credentials Committee of the special session should have the same membership as the Credentials Committee of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

General Committee

9. The General Committee of the special session should consist of the President and the 21 Vice-Presidents of the special session, the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly and the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Rules of procedure

10. The rules of procedure of the General Assembly should apply at the special session.

Level of representation

11. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142, participation in the special session should be at a high political level.

Debate in plenary

12. Statements in the debate in plenary should not exceed seven minutes.

13. The list of speakers for the debate in plenary should be established by a drawing of lots. Heads of State, Vice-Presidents, Crown Princes or Princesses and Heads of Government should be given precedence in the establishment of the list of speakers and in the speaking order and should have equal standing as regards the list of speakers. They should be followed by Ministers/Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Chairmen of Delegation/Vice-Ministers and Chairmen of Delegation.

Allocation of items

14. All items of the draft provisional agenda should be allocated to the plenary, and items 8 and 9 should also be allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Participation of speakers other than Member States

15. Observers may make statements in the debate in the plenary.

16. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142, States members of specialized agencies that are not members of the United Nations may participate in the special session in the capacity of observers.

17. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142, associate members of the regional commissions may participate in the special session, subject to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in the same capacity of observer that applied to their participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

18. Representatives of the United Nations system may make statements in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

19. In its resolution 53/120 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly invited the Commission on the Status of Women, meeting as the preparatory committee for the special session, in March 1999, to recommend to the General Assembly appropriate arrangements for the involvement and participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session.

Schedule of plenary meetings

20. Ten plenary meetings will be held over the five-day period, with two meetings per day as follows: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

United Nations E/CN.6/2000/PC/9

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Establishment of the list of speakers for the debate in plenary of the special session of the General Assembly

Note by the Chairperson of the preparatory committee

1. Following consultations with the President of the General Assembly, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" has the honour to bring the following to the attention of the preparatory body.

Organization of the plenary meetings of the special session

2. The special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" would hold 10 plenary meetings over the five-day period, with two meetings per day: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

3. The meeting on Monday morning would hear 13 speakers only, because organizational matters would take up one hour. Subsequently, all morning meetings would feature 18 speakers, and all afternoon meetings 19 speakers. On the afternoon of Friday, in addition to final speakers in the debate, the Assembly would adopt the final document or documents.

Time-limits in the debate in plenary

4. Statements should not exceed seven minutes.

Precedence in the speaking order

5. Heads of State, Vice-Presidents, Crown Princes or Princesses and Heads of Government would be given precedence in the speaking order and would have equal standing as regards the list of speakers. They would be followed by Ministers/Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Chairmen of Delegation/Vice-Ministers and Chairmen of Delegation.

* E/CN.6/2000/PC/1.

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Establishment of the list of speakers for the debate in plenary

6. The list of speakers for the debate in plenary would be established by a drawing of lots. A meeting for this purpose would be convened by the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, on Wednesday, 26 April 2000, in the General Assembly Hall.

7. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would preside over the meeting and would draw names of Member States from two boxes. The first box (from which names would be drawn first) would contain the names of the Member States that had informed the secretariat of the Assembly, in writing, by 5 p.m. on Monday, 24 April 2000, that their speaker would be a Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government. The second box would contain the names of other Member States.

8. When called, the representative of the Member State would approach the podium, where 10 boxes representing the 10 meetings would be displayed. Each box would contain the numbers corresponding to speaking slots at that meeting. The representative would be asked to draw, from the box representing the preferred meeting, a chip showing the number of the speaking slot, and would then be asked to indicate the level of representation of the speaker, if not already indicated. If at that time a representative was unable to indicate at which level his/her country would be represented, it would be assumed that the representation would be at the Permanent Representative (Chairman of Delegation) level. The result of the drawing of lots and the indicated level of representation of Member States would be recorded by the Secretariat.

9. Should a delegation be absent from the meeting room when the name of the country was called, it would be given the opportunity to select a speaking slot from the box representing the meeting of choice (as availability permitted) following the conclusion of the drawing of lots. This opportunity would be given in the same order in which the Member State's name was initially drawn.

10. Within 10 working days of the meeting the Secretariat would publish the results of the drawing of lots, but rearranged to reflect the precedence outlined above.

11. Should a delegation be unable to attend the meeting and participate in the drawing of lots, it would have the opportunity to select a speaking slot from those remaining by contacting the staff of the secretariat of the General Assembly at any time after 26 April 2000.

Exchanges of speaking slots and changes in the level of representation

12. Exchanges of speaking slots between delegations would be possible and both delegations should inform the staff of the secretariat of the General Assembly in writing of such an intent. In the case of equality of rank, a delegation would move to the exact position of the other delegation. In the case of inequality in rank, a delegation would move to the last position in the appropriate category at the meeting to which it was changing.

13. Should the level of representation of a delegation change from the Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government category to any other category, then the speaker would move, according to the category, to the last position for Member States in the list of speakers for the last plenary meeting.

14. Should the level of representation of delegations other than those mentioned in paragraph 13 above change, the speaker would move to the last position in the appropriate category at the same meeting.

Inclusion of observers in the list of speakers

15. The preparatory committee would recommend to the General Assembly that observers be allowed to make statements in the debate in plenary and that, according to the practice of the Assembly, they take the floor after all Member States have spoken.

16. A number of organizations and entities have received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly.

17. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142 of 17 December 1999, States members of specialized agencies that are not members of the United Nations may participate in the special session in the capacity of observers.

18. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/142, associate members of the regional

commissions may participate in the special session, subject to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in the same capacity of observer that applied to their participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

19. Observers would be included in the list of speakers for the debate in plenary, on a first-come first-served basis, after the first list of speakers had been issued, by contacting the secretariat of the General Assembly in writing.

20. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, Palestine would participate in the drawing of lots so that it could be determined at which meeting it would be the last speaker.